

IRONY, AN INTEGRAL PART OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE, FOR THE CREATION OF MULTI-LAYERED AND POLYSEMY OF A LITERARY TEXT

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Abstract

Irony is a powerful tool for creating polysemy and multi-layered text. It allows the author to hide the true meaning of the statement, offering the reader to interpret it at different levels. In Russian literature, irony plays a key role, forming a double bottom of works and contributing to their deep comprehension. The article examines the role of irony in Russian literature on the example of the works of such writers as A. S. Pushkin, N. V. Gogol, F. M. Dostoevsky, L. N. Tolstoy, A. P. Chekhov and M. A. Bulgakov.

Keywords: Irony, polysemy, layering, subtext, satire, Russian realism, artistic device.

Introduction

Irony (from the Greek *eironeia* – pretense, mockery) is a special stylistic device that consists in the opposition of explicit and hidden meanings. It can manifest itself in the form of mockery, sarcasm or a paradoxical combination of meanings. The functions of irony in literature are diverse: it can perform a satirical role, deepen the psychologism of the work, emphasize the contradictions of reality and form a special artistic subtext.¹

According to V. V. Vinogradov, "irony is one of the most important methods of creating polysemy in literature, in which the true meaning of a statement is opposite to its literal meaning."² As M. M. Bakhtin asserted, "irony is not only a mockery, but also a way of deep penetration into the essence of phenomena."³

The main functions of irony in literature are: creating polysemy of the text – irony allows the same phrase or situation to acquire different meanings depending on the context; the formation of hidden meanings – helps the author to express his attitude to events and characters in a veiled way; social and philosophical criticism – makes it possible to comprehend the deep contradictions of society; text structuring – can organize the narrative, creating additional semantic levels.

¹ Lotman, Y. M. 1968 g. *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta*. Moscow: Iskusstvo. 384 p. (In Russian)

² Vinogradov, V. V. 1972 g. *O yazyke khudozhestvennoy literatury* [On the language of fiction]. Moscow: Nauka. 456 p. (In Russian)

³ Barkov, A. V. 2002g. *Satire and irony in Russian literature of the XX century*. St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo. 320 p. (In Russian)

Pushkin widely used irony as a way of criticizing society and human weaknesses. In "Eugene Onegin" he combines romantic irony with realism, creating a multi-layered perception⁴: "Habit is given to us from above: it is a substitute for happiness." This phrase can be taken as a serious statement, but upon deep analysis, it becomes clear that there is a hidden mockery here.

Gogol masterfully mastered satirical irony, which is especially clearly manifested in "The Government Inspector" and "Dead Souls": "There is nothing to say, the bell tower is good, but the church was not adapted to it." This ironic commentary on Russia reflects the deep meaning of Gogol's works – the imperfection of society and its hypocrisy.

Dostoevsky used irony to create multi-layered characters and reflect the internal contradictions of the characters. In "Crime and Punishment" there is a hidden irony in the words of Porfiry Petrovich: "And you, let me know, are you drunk or are you just so?" Such phrases carry an ironic connotation, revealing the subtlety of psychological analysis.

Tolstoy often used irony to describe the aristocracy. In War and Peace, he describes secular society with subtle sarcasm: "He was as clever as the devil and as kind as an angel." Here is a multi-layered perception of the character - the author clearly doubts his true virtue.

Chekhov's irony is built on a combination of the comic and the tragic⁵. In the story "The Man in the Case", the central character becomes the object of ironic comprehension: "What a boredom it is to live in this world!" This phrase, uttered by the petty teacher Belikov, sounds both tragic and comical, creating a multi-layered perception.

Bulgakov used irony to create philosophical overtones, especially in The Master and Margarita. Woland says: "As a rule, people love money, but it has always been... Mankind loves money, no matter what it is made of." Here, irony expresses a deep critique of human nature and society.

The polysemy created by irony makes the work open to various interpretations. As R. Barthes pointed out, "the more irony, the less unambiguous the text."⁶ This is confirmed by the analysis of Russian classics: the works of Gogol, Dostoevsky, Chekhov and Bulgakov allow for different readings, precisely due to the ironic multi-layeredness.

Conclusion

Irony is an integral part of Russian literature, creating polysemy and multi-layered text. It allows authors to convey complex ideas, combining mockery, tragedy and philosophical comprehension. The works of Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Bulgakov clearly demonstrate how irony forms hidden meanings, makes the text deeper and richer. As M. M. Bakhtin rightly noted, "irony is a way to see the world in all its complexity."⁷

⁴ Likhachev, D. S. 1981 g. Poetics of Russian literature. Leningrad: Nauka. 400 p. (In Russian)

⁵ Kunin, I. A. 1993 g. Chekhov i literaturnaya traditsiya [Chekhov and the literary tradition]. Moscow: Progress. 275 p. (In Russian)

⁶ Barthes, R. 1986. S/Z. Paris: Éditions du Seuil. 220 p.

⁷ Bakhtin, M. M. (1979). Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics. Moscow: Nauka.



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